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Retire the thought of retirement for 83-year-old state worker

(by Kim Saylor Brannock, Education Cabinet)

Christine Crowe is not your typical worker. At 83, she is the oldest full-time employee of the Kentucky Education Cabinet and after more than 47 years on the job, retirement is not in her vocabulary.

The Monroe County native is a placement interviewer in the Louisville KentuckianaWorks One Stop Career Center in the cabinet's Office for Employment and Training (OET). Since she came to work for state government in 1958 during Governor A.B. "Happy" Chandler's administration, Crowe said she has never thought of quitting or retiring.

Crowe said her goal is to work for state government for at least 50 years. In some ways you could say the never wed Louisville resident is married to her job. "Til death do us part or as long as I'm able and doing the job they want me to do," she said of her career plans.

Crowe also is not your typical older worker. According a recently released federal report called "65+ in the United States: 2005" Americans are living longer, healthier lives but choosing to retire at earlier ages than 50 years ago. The report attributed much of that change in retirement attitudes to better public and private benefit plans.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data for January 2006, 4.4 percent of all females 75 years and older are in the labor force and that includes part- and full-time workers. In total U.S. employment, only one-third of 1 percent or 454,000 are in the category of females 75 years and older. The bureau doesn't publish statistics on people Crowe's age in the workforce.

Unlike Crowe, most older Americans who decide to continue in the workforce are part-time employees. According to the 65+ federal report, in 2003 about half of employed men 70 and older and about two-thirds of women 70 and over who were employed worked part-time. The reasons for staying in the workforce past

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Lebanon Career Center opens its new location

On Friday, April 21, local industries and job seekers were welcomed to the Lebanon Career Center's new location at 145 Cemetery Drive, Suite 4.

Tommy Wheatley, OET manager, explained the importance of having the new center to provide better service to both the employer community and the job seekers. "The move allows the office to be a comprehensive center with four partners in one location which means services can be provided in a one-stop setting," Wheatley said.



OET Executive Director Andrew Frauenhoffer performed the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Lincoln Trail Center's new location.

Wheatley thanked Lebanon Mayor Gary Crenshaw, County Judge-Executive Dave Hourigan, Tom Lund and Karen King with the Marion County Economic Development for their roles in supporting and establishing the center. Wheatley said, "The community backing the center was paramount in its success." Over 50 people attended including State Representative Jimmy Higdon.

In addition to OET, the partners that comprise the Lebanon Career Center are the Lincoln Trail ADD, Adult Education and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Gateway Area takes job fair nationwide

Nearly 400 job seekers attended the Gateway Area Job Fair held April 27. In addition, 26 employers were on-hand at the Perkins Center to accept applications or resumes and to talk to potential employees.

One of the unique advantages of the job fair was the on site availability of Adult Education's mobile van that is equipped with 10 computers with Internet access. Job seekers could search for job opportunities on America's Job Bank locally, regionally or nationally.

Harry Ryan, manager of the Morehead OET, served as chair of the Gateway Area Job Fair 2006 Committee.

Lincoln Trail and Chamber host 6th annual job fair

On April 20, the Lincoln Trail Career Center in conjunction with the Elizabethtown Chamber of Commerce hosted their 6th annual job fair. Although there was severe weather most of the day, over 400 job seekers came to visit the 51 employers that participated.

The job seekers included 157 veterans. Of those, there were 50 disabled veterans and 51 with four years of college or a bachelor's degree and 13 with a master's degree.



Mark Pruitt, right, was taking applications for Akebono Corporate Office. Akebono will be locating in Elizabethtown later in 2006.

New on the OET Internet

The OET Key Programs and Services is a recent addition to the OET Web site. It touches on all programs and services offered by OET to give the public a better understanding of what OET has to offer. While on the document, key words and links will take the viewer to additional information about the subject.

The document is available from the OET Internet Home Page for the viewer to read and/or to print. Look for the button labeled "Key Programs and Services."

In addition, a Calendar of Events is now available on the site. The calendar is being used to post and promote such events as OET job fairs, career days and seminars to the public.

Upcoming Event

Job seekers will have an opportunity to meet with employers at the Job Quest fair to be held May 24, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., at the Executive Inn, Florida and International Rooms, Owensboro. Contact Delbert Lee, GRADD, (270) 926-4433 for more information.

Contact information and a brief description of the event are included for those in the area who are interested in participating.

The link to the calendar is located at the top of the OET Home Page and also under Employer Services and Jobseeker Services. There are currently events scheduled for May 2006.

OET's Web site is located at www.oet.ky.gov.

Did You Know?

May is Older Americans Month. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, five million Americans 65 and older are in the labor force.

Graduation day in Covington

January 27 was a day of celebration for eight Kentucky Works Program (KWP) students at the Covington One-Stop who graduated from the Job Readiness Activity (JRA) class. Three of the graduates received Outstanding Student and Perfect Attendance Awards.

The One-Stop Career Alliance of Northern Kentucky in Covington offers the month-long Job Readiness Activity (JRA) class to help KWP students improve skills that are needed for success in the workplace. The intense course requires perfect attendance to graduate.

Paulette Jones, state program coordinator; Dede Dollar, assistant manager; Debbie Lyons, workforce development consultant; and Lisa Taylor and Lee Vonderhaar, both workforce development specialists, participated in the graduation ceremony and applauded the students for their commitment to attend the class and for taking the initiative to reach their goals.



Eight students graduated from the Job Readiness Class provided by the Covington Kentucky Works Program staff. Standing in the photo are, left to right, Greg Perry, Lee Vonderhaar, Paulette Jones, Lisa Taylor, Dede Dollar, Debbie Lyons, Debbie Wainscott, Patty Abbott, Stephanie Chandler, Natlie Hankerson, Schawanna Jones. Seated are Rio Malony and James Lynch.

The students expressed their appreciation to Jones for the program and the assistance and support that the Covington staff had given them. As of May 8,

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Paducah Career Center participates in Chamber event

In February 2006, the Paducah Career Center was well represented at the Ballard County Annual Chamber Dinner. The keynote speaker was Steven G. Isaacs, University of Kentucky assistant director for community and economic development and director of the Center for Leadership Development.



Networking was a large part of the Ballard County Annual Chamber Dinner held in the new Ballard Memorial High School. The high school cafeteria held the dinner and awards presentation for the 190 guests attending the event.



The Paducah Career Center had one of the 20 displays that were set up in the front lobby of the school. Participants from the center included, left to right, Alice Johnson and Mary Anne Medlock, Paducah Area Development District (PADD); Gina Triplett, Office of Employment and Training; Dee Taylor, PADD, and Cindy Ragland, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. They handed out information about the services the center provides.

Retire the thought of retirement (continued)

full retirement age vary but the report says that people 62 and over most often cite enjoyment of working as the reason they continue.



Christine Crowe, 83, is the oldest full-time employee of the Education Cabinet. Crowe works at the Louisville KentuckianaWorks One Stop Career Center.

Crowe graduated from Western Kentucky University in 1942 with a degree in elementary education and since entering the workforce that year as a sixth-grader teacher, Crowe has never been unemployed. After four years of teaching, Crowe's brother Paul was elected county court clerk in Monroe County and asked her to work for him as a deputy clerk. In 1954, Crowe succeeded her brother as county court clerk and worked in the position for four years. She was the first female elected to a public office in Monroe County. At 35, she started working for state government in Louisville.

Her varied career has taken her from the small town of Tompkinsville to Louisville. "The first year I taught in a one-room school in Monroe County. We didn't even know there was another county," she said laughing. "I got lost the first day finding the building" in downtown Louisville at Second and Walnut streets. In 1960, the office moved to its current location at Sixth and Cedar streets.

"I've stayed because I like the job. I have no regrets of working for state government," she said.

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Chamber recognizes Madisonville OET Manager



The Madisonville-Hopkins County Chamber of Commerce recently named Madisonville OET Manager Debbie Howard its 2005 Ambassador of the Year. The Chamber recognized Howard for her work to welcome new businesses to the area and her support to causes that contribute to the success of the business community.

Henderson OET prepares for the Big One



Dorothy Summers, an Easter Seals Senior Community Service Employment Program participant, ducks under a desk during an emergency action drill as part of Earthquake Preparedness Week. The Henderson OET office is located along the New Madrid Fault Area and its staff know that earthquake preparedness can minimize potential injuries and damage.

Elizabethtown OET meets urgent staffing needs of TG KY

In November, Toyota Gosei (TG KY) in Lebanon contacted OET's Lincoln Trail Career Center for help in hiring more than 100 employees by the end of 2005 and additional workers in 2006. As of this time, TG KY has hired 129 people with the help of the center.

OET Executive Director Andrew Frauenhoffer stated, "This is a key role of OET to provide these types of cost-efficient services to the employer community."

Elizabethtown OET Manager Tom Wheatley said they filled the job requests by working with plant representatives to focus on how OET could meet their needs. TG KY wanted to hire 81 production and 21 salary workers and identified Boyle, Casey, Taylor and Green counties as the areas of their focus because of recent factory layoffs. The plant also needed OET's assistance in testing the applicants.

To recruit job candidates, OET took a two-pronged approach. First, TG KY representatives set up an office to take applications at the OET centers in those four counties. Secondly, OET conducted one-day job fairs in the Danville, Liberty, Campbellsville and Greensburg OET offices. Over 100 applications were taken as a result of these job fairs. Another 170 individuals applied during a one-day job fair held at the TG KY plant.

With the influx of applicants, OET needed to test them in a short period of time. Lincoln Trail Career Center worked with the Campbellsville OET office to set up mass testing at the plant.

Additional one-day job fairs were held at the Danville and Liberty OET offices to help TG KY hire about 70 more staff this year. As of March 6, the career center had made more than 534 referrals to fill the openings with the assistance of the Campbellsville, Danville and Somerset OET offices.

Retire the thought of retirement (continued)

“The biggest reward is finding jobs for people and making a change in their lives.”

Crowe’s first state job was as an employment interviewer and she made \$300 a month. “At that time it was a reasonable salary. Gas wasn’t \$3 a gallon,” she said.

For about 25 years of her OET career Crowe was a supervisor in the Louisville office but she says she is happy not to have supervisory duties now. As a placement interviewer, Crowe counsels and places people in jobs, sets up job tests to determine their skills and refers them to other agencies for help.

Crowe said the biggest change she has seen in the workplace is computers. For most of her career in state government forms had to be filled out by hand by employees but now people can self-register using a computer. Crowe said even though she has only had a computer in the workplace for a few years, she has never felt intimidated by them.

Many of the people Crowe encounters on her job are at a low point in their lives. “We try to bring their spirits up if we can and tell them to look on the positive side and it will work out,” Crowe said of helping people who are looking for jobs.

Crowe said she often runs into people that she has placed in jobs and some even come by to visit her at the office. In some cases, she has helped people get several jobs over the years and they’re often surprised to see she is still working when they come back to the office.

Crowe’s good health has been a big factor in her ability to keep working full time. Except for being off for about eight weeks in 2003 for health reasons, she has been able to work steadily throughout her career. According to the 65+ study, declining health is one of the main reasons that aging Americans decide to retire.

So what does Crowe say when people ask her about when she going to retire? “I’m staying until I’m ready to go,” she says with smile.

Graduation day in Covington (continued)

six of the eight students have full-time jobs and the remaining two students have leads for employment.

Class participant Natlie Hankerson wrote a letter of appreciation to the staff saying, “Participating in the Job Readiness Class was beneficial in so many ways. I signed up for KTAP in November 2005, having relocated from Cincinnati, Ohio to Newport, Kentucky and not having a job. I had been unemployed for six months and basically had fallen into a rut. Through the JRA course I was able to re-establish my job seeking skills and recognize that I still had something to offer in the work force. Thanks to you, Lisa, and Lee – I am starting a new position on February 1, 2006. It was only by using the skills taught in this class that I was able to design a work-worthy resume, complete a faultless application, prepare myself for a professional interview; and then follow up with a Thank You letter to my prospective employer. Now I look forward to again becoming self supportive and independently taking care of my daughter.”

KWP provides employment assessment, job readiness training, job search, work experience and job placement assistance to eligible individuals participating in the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (K-TAP).

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